



ACS NEWSLETTER

American Citizen Services, Recife

DECEMBER 2015

2015 Holiday Message from Ambassador Liliana Ayalde!



As we approach Christmas and New Year's Day, I would like to take a moment to wish all Americans in Brazil a Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays.

For both Americans and Brazilians, this is a special time of year. While we celebrate these holidays in different ways, we often have the chance to spend this time with family and loved ones. A spirit of love, charity, and generosity permeates the holiday season in both countries. We share meals, presents, and goodwill with family, friends, and those less fortunate. These acts of warmth and kindness help bring us closer

together, and I hope each of you will experience the joy of both giving and receiving in the days ahead.

Besides the chance to be with family and loved ones, the approach of the New Year also offers an opportunity to reflect on the past year and look forward to the next. While this is a time to celebrate, it is also a time to be mindful of those less fortunate, to keep them in our thoughts and prayers, and to consider ways that each of us can share and extend the holiday warmth and cheer.

As I reflect on 2015, I am particularly heartened by the efforts made to address our most pressing global problems. The Paris Climate Agreement, fortified by the strong support of the United States and Brazil, is a shining example of successful cooperation between our countries. We look forward to 2016 when the Rio Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games will once again put Brazil on the world stage.

Americans in Brazil, your ties to Brazilian family, friends, and colleagues will continue to serve as the foundation of the abiding friendship and goodwill that our two countries have enjoyed for nearly two centuries. May this holiday season strengthen those ties and prepare you well for a happy and successful 2016. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Meet our Fortaleza Consular Agent Laura Lehto!



In addition to our Embassy and Consulate Generals, Mission Brazil also has four Consular Agencies located in the cities of Fortaleza, Porto Alegre, Salvador and Manaus. The Consular Agencies provide basic American Citizen Services such as a Consular Report of Birth Abroad, First time or Renewal Passports and Notary services. They are also able to assist with special citizens services. Laura Lehto is the Fortaleza Consular Agent. Originally from Cleveland, Ohio, she arrived in Fortaleza in 1985. She originally came to Brazil to work in Natal as a musical missionary, and then started working with a church in Fortaleza as well as teaching music and English.

She was the director of studies for the Cultura Inglesa CE for about 12 years.

Nowadays she teaches English online and works with English language exams with Cambridge Assessment (UK). In her free time she enjoys music, watching films and walking on the beach.

About her work as a Consular Agent she says: *"I've learned so much. Everyday is different. The people who I work with are so helpful. I really enjoy it."*

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What is a Warden?

Wardens are private U.S. citizens residing abroad who volunteer to assist the U.S. Embassy or Consulate by acting as a contact in their area for other U.S. citizens and by disseminating official U.S. government information regarding safety or travel. Every U.S. Embassy and Consulate has a warden system that they use to send important messages to other Americans.

Warden Spotlight



Last month our Vice Consul David Freitas and our warden Alex Grinfeder enjoyed a wonderful American Football game in Recife. Alex Grinfeder lives in Jaboatão dos Guararapes and volunteered to be one of our wardens in the area of Recife Sul, which covers the neighborhoods of Piedade, Boa Viagem, Setúbal and Candeias.

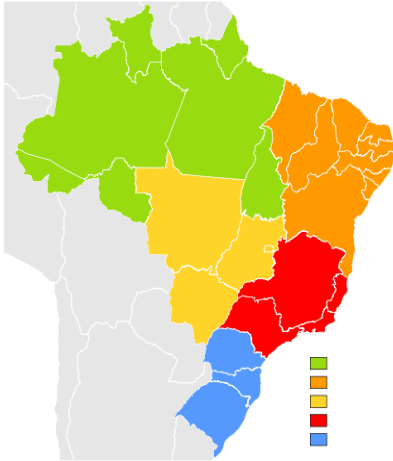
Matthew Berigan, a warden for Paraíba, visited the Consulate and was able to spend some time with our staff and our Consular Section Chief Michael Cathey.



Looking for Volunteers!

The US Consulate General Recife would like to know if you are interested in being a warden volunteer. If so, please send an email to RecifeACS@state.gov with your contact information. We are always interested in new wardens!

Recife's Consular District



The American Citizen Services (ACS) Unit at the Embassy in Brasília and at the Consulates in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Recife offer a full range of services to U.S. Citizens residing or traveling in Brazil. Each unit has consular jurisdiction over an area in Brazil.

U.S. Consulate General Recife's Consular District is made up of Alagoas, Ceará, Maranhão, Paraíba, Pernambuco, Piauí, Rio Grande do Norte and Sergipe. (Bahia is part of Rio de Janeiro's Consular District.)

Elimination of Add Visa Pages



Effective January 1, 2016, the Department will eliminate the consular service of supplemental 24-page Visa Page Inserts (VPIs) for passports. Requests for VPIs on Form DS-4085 will only be accepted for current (legacy) passports until December 31, 2015.

The determination to eliminate VPIs was made after considering document utility, cost effectiveness, customer service, internal controls, security, international practice, and operational factors.

While the Department understands frequent travelers may be inconvenienced by this change, we are phasing out VPIs because they pose vulnerabilities to the physical security of the passport and to the issuance process. When applying for a new passport, some customers may need to update residence permits or foreign entry/exit visas to comply with foreign country immigration practices. U.S. citizens are advised to renew their passports early to make sure they have enough blank pages for visa stamps and residence permits. In most cases, we can provide a full validity new passport within a few weeks. In some cases, however, we may be able to issue an emergency passport (EPDP) if necessary.

ELECTION 2016



Did you know that we can help you file your absentee ballot? Generally, all U.S. citizens 18 years or older who are or will be residing outside the United States at the time of an election are eligible to vote absentee in any election for federal office. Some states even allow overseas voters to vote in state elections. To confirm eligibility and residency requirements, contact your state or territory's chief election administrative office or visit the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) website at www.fvap.gov. The FVAP website makes voting absentee easy.

You can drop off your voter registration requests, absentee ballot requests, and completed absentee ballots at the U.S. Consulate General Recife for delivery to your local election official in the United States. You do not need to make an appointment with us to do so. The U.S. Government offers this service to U.S. Citizens living overseas to make absentee voting as easy as possible. Any U.S. Citizen can drop off the mail items listed above and the we will send them via Diplomatic Pouch to the United States Postal Service (USPS) in Virginia. The mail will then enter the USPS system. It will take approximately three weeks for the mailed item to reach your local election official. You must include proper postage and complete "to" and "from" addresses on envelopes. Proper postage is needed for domestic mail, as if the envelope was deposited in a mailbox in the United States. If the envelope says postage paid on it, then no additional postage is necessary. Voting for candidates for federal offices does not affect your federal or state tax liability.

Questions? Please email us at voterecife@state.gov.



Zika and Brazil

By Emily Schlink, Registered Nurse, U.S. Consulate General Recife

Closely related to dengue and chikungunya, the Zika virus is an *Aedes aegypti* mosquito borne virus that causes symptoms mild fever, itchy rash, conjunctivitis (inflamed, red eyes), headaches and arthralgia (joint pain), which appears 3-12 days after a mosquito bite. Symptoms last around 1 week and the only medications available are to relieve symptoms such as acetaminophen and anti-itch creams. Since all three viruses are similar, use of ibuprofen and aspirin products are not recommended for pain relief due to potential bleeding risks associated with some forms of dengue. There is no vaccine or cure for Zika virus but the majority of people recover with no sequelae and are thought to be immune from future Zika reinfection.

However, in recent months Zika virus has caught worldwide attention- not only due to its increasing spread into Latin America, but also to its potential link to babies born with microcephaly and other neurological syndromes. Brazil health authorities are investigating links with Zika virus infection in the first trimester of pregnancy.

Authorities additionally are investigating links with Zika virus and Guillain-Barre Syndrome, where the body attacks its own peripheral nervous system resulting in a rapid-onset muscle weakness and potential paralysis. In both areas of concern, (microcephaly and GBS) no cause and effect has been found, but collaboration with the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the Ministry of Health, mitigation and surveillance continue to be priority.

What this means for travelers and residents of Brazil, is that the need for mosquito precautions continues to be of utmost importance. Avoid accumulation of water in outside containers to prevent them from becoming mosquito breeding grounds. Cover household water storage tanks so that mosquitoes cannot get into them. Unclog drains that can cause standing water and bagging up trash. At the individual level, use insect repellent containing DEET or permethrin, wear long sleeves and pants, and, if possible stay in air conditioned rooms. All concerns regarding pregnancy and insect protection should be communicated with a healthcare practitioner.

USEFUL LINKS:

Travel Warnings & Advisories: www.travel.state.gov

Registration with the Consulate General: step.state.gov

Brazilian Federal Police: www.dpf.gov.br

Absentee Voting Information: www.fvap.gov

Federal Benefit Information: <http://www.vba.va.gov/VBA>

Social Security Administration: <http://www.ssa.gov>

UPCOMING HOLIDAYS:



DECEMBER 25 — CHRISTMAS DAY

JANUARY 1 — NEW YEAR

*We will be closed on these days. In an emergency,
please call the after-hours duty phone:*

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